

### Amendments to the Claims

1 Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of using policy information in responding to arrival of  
2 instant messages, comprising ~~steps of~~:

3 defining, by an instant messaging (“IM”) user, policy information specifying criteria for  
4 responding to arrival of instant messages, wherein the policy information comprises a list of  
5 selected application programs which are each distinct from an instant messaging application used  
6 by the IM user and which are each executable on a computing device of the IM user;

7 receiving an instant message from an IM sender who is not already participating in an IM  
8 session with the IM user;

9 programmatically determining, responsive to the receiving, whether any of the selected  
10 application programs in the list are currently executing on the computing device of the IM user;  
11 and

12 responding to the arrival of the instant message by opening a new window on a graphical  
13 user interface of the computing device of the IM user and displaying the instant message therein if  
14 the programmatically determining [[step]] has a negative result, or by adding an icon representing  
15 the instant message to an already-open window but not displaying the instant message itself if the  
16 programmatically determining [[step]] has a positive result, wherein:

17 the already-open window comprises one of an already-open buddy list window that  
18 visually depicts a list of each IM partner from an IM address book of the IM user or an already-  
19 open status window that visually depicts a list of each currently-active IM partner of the IM user;

20 the icon is added in association with a representation, in the visually-depicted list,  
21 of the IM sender; and

22                   the icon visually indicates that the instant message is available for on-request  
23 display and can be activated by the IM user to cause the on-request display of the instant message.

Claims 2 - 8 (canceled)

1       Claim 9 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the policy  
2 information is specified as a set of rules.

Claims 10 - 14 (canceled)

1       Claim 15 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising ~~the step of~~  
2 generating an audible indicator when the programmatically determining [[step]] has the positive  
3 result.

Claims 16 - 27 (canceled)

1       Claim 28 (previously presented): A system to use policy information in responding to arrival of  
2 instant messages, comprising:  
3           means for defining, by an instant messaging (“IM”) user, policy information specifying  
4 criteria for responding to arrival of instant messages, wherein the policy information comprises a  
5 list of selected application programs which are each distinct from an instant messaging application  
6 used by the IM user and which are each executable on a computing device of the IM user;

7 means for receiving an instant message from an IM sender who is not already participating  
8 in an IM session with the IM user;

9 means for programmatically determining, responsive to operation of the means for  
10 receiving, whether any of the selected application programs in the list are currently executing on  
11 the computing device of the IM user; and

12 means for responding to the arrival of the instant message by opening a new window on a  
13 graphical user interface of the computing device of the IM user and displaying the instant message  
14 therein if the means for programmatically determining yields a negative result, or by adding an  
15 icon representing the instant message to an already-open window but not displaying the instant  
16 message itself if the means for programmatically determining yields a positive result, wherein:

17 the already-open window comprises one of an already-open buddy list window that  
18 visually depicts a list of each IM partner from an IM address book of the IM user or an already-  
19 open status window that visually depicts a list of each currently-active IM partner of the IM user;

20 the icon is added in association with a representation, in the visually-depicted list,  
21 of the IM sender; and

22 the icon visually indicates that the instant message is available for on-request  
23 display and can be activated by the IM user to cause the on-request display of the instant message.

1 Claim 29 (previously presented): A computer program product for using policy information in  
2 responding to arrival of instant messages, the computer program product embodied on one or  
3 more computer-readable storage media and comprising:

4 computer-readable program code for defining, by an instant messaging (“IM”) user, policy

5 information specifying criteria for responding to arrival of instant messages, wherein the policy  
6 information comprises a list of selected application programs which are each distinct from an  
7 instant messaging application used by the IM user and which are each executable on a computing  
8 device of the IM user;

9 computer-readable program code for receiving an instant message from an IM sender who  
10 is not already participating in an IM session with the IM user;

11 computer-readable program code for programmatically determining, responsive to  
12 operation of the computer-readable program code for receiving, whether any of the selected  
13 application programs in the list are currently executing on the computing device of the IM user;  
14 and

15 computer-readable program code for responding to the arrival of the instant message by  
16 opening a new window on a graphical user interface of the computing device of the IM user and  
17 displaying the instant message therein if the computer-readable program code for  
18 programmatically determining yields a negative result, or by adding an icon representing the  
19 instant message to an already-open window but not displaying the instant message itself if the  
20 computer-readable program code for programmatically determining yields a positive result,  
21 wherein:

22 the already-open window comprises one of an already-open buddy list window that  
23 visually depicts a list of each IM partner from an IM address book of the IM user or an already-  
24 open status window that visually depicts a list of each currently-active IM partner of the IM user;

25 the icon is added in association with a representation, in the visually-depicted list,  
26 of the IM sender; and

27                   the icon visually indicates that the instant message is available for on-request  
28 display and can be activated by the IM user to cause the on-request display of the instant message.